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Fact Sheet

Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program

Household Spending on Education

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Note of appreciation

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Household Spending on Education

Governments in Canada provide funding to cover the costs of basic education at the elementary and secondary levels. Nonetheless, parents often incur costs for materials and supplies, and for a variety of school activities. In some cases, parents pay for private tutoring or enroll their children in private schools where they pay tuition fees.

At the postsecondary level, many institutions receive substantial funding from governments, but also rely on student tuition fees as an important source of revenue. Students and their families also assume greater responsibility at this level for books and supplies, and for travel and living costs.

According to the Survey of Household Spending, 35% of Canadian households incurred educational expenses for such items as textbooks, school supplies and tuition costs in 2007, spending an average of $2,949 (Table B.2.7). The highest costs were for tuition fees: an average of $1,306 for elementary-secondary tuition among households that incurred this expense, and an average of $4,017 for postsecondary tuition.

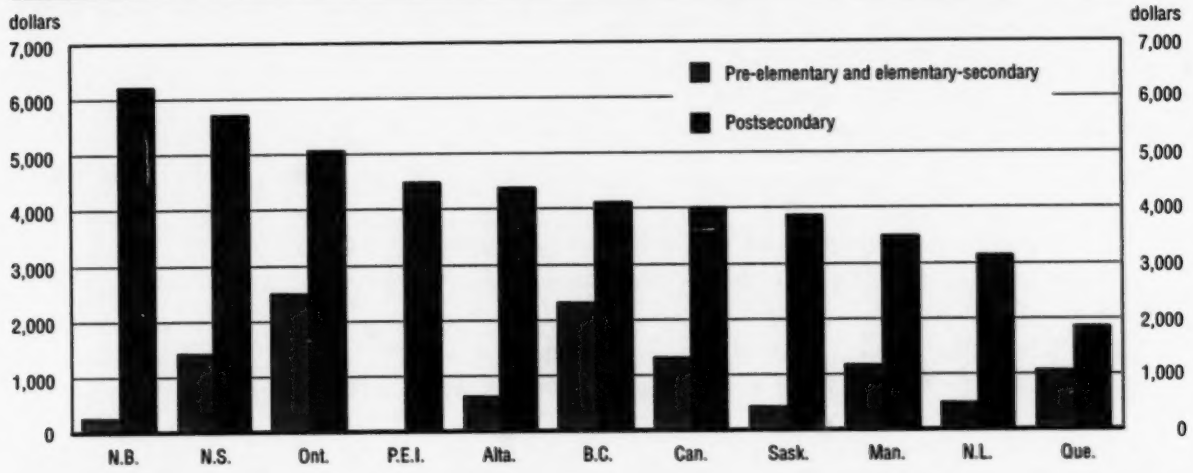
The percentage of households incurring educational expenses ranged from 28% in Newfoundland and Labrador to 39% in British Columbia. Only 9% of households paid tuition at the pre-elementary and elementary-secondary levels, compared with 15% at the postsecondary level. Among the households incurring tuition costs at the pre-elementary and elementary-secondary levels, the average amount spent varied widely, from less than $500 in Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan, to $2,481 in Ontario (Chart 1 and Table B.2.7). For households that paid postsecondary tuition, average expenditure was lowest in Quebec, at $1,832, and highest in New Brunswick at $6,223.

The percentage of households incurring educational expenses decreased in 2007, perhaps due to changes in the way expenditures are reported.[1] Between 1997 and 2006, there was little change, with approximately 43% of households reporting that they spent money in 2006 on items such as tuition, textbooks, and school supplies. The average amounts spent, however, increased over the same period, from an average of $1,925 in 1997 to $2,759 in 2006, in constant 2007 dollars (Chart 2). Part of this increase is likely due to increases in tuition fees. In 1997, the average household expenditure on postsecondary tuition fees was $2,721; by 2006, this had risen to $3,896.

1. In 2007, in order to reduce respondent burden, new screening questions were added to the Survey of Household Spending questionnaire for some categories. For a few categories including education, this change has resulted in a lower than expected percentage reporting and may impact average expenditures per household reporting for some items under that category.

Chart 1

Average expenditure per household incurred on tuition at pre-elementary and elementary-secondary, and postsecondary levels per household incurring such expenditure, Canada and jurisdictions, 2007



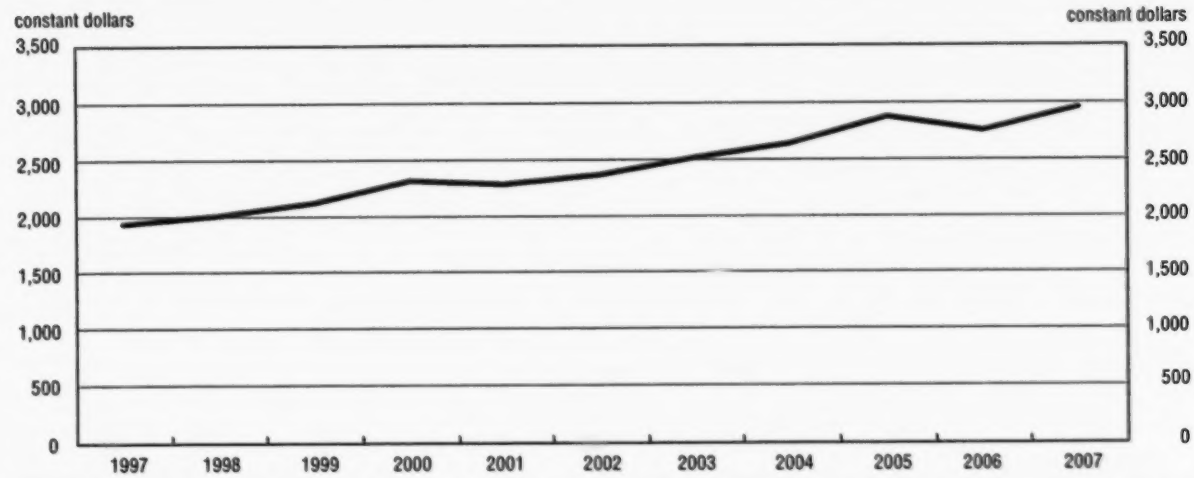
Notes: Jurisdictions are ordered according to household expenditure on postsecondary tuition.

Data for Prince Edward Island at the pre-elementary and elementary-secondary level, and for the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut are too unreliable to be published.

Source: Table B.2.7.

Chart 2

Average education expenditure per household incurring such expenditure, Canada, 1997 to 2007 (in constant 2007 dollars)



Notes: In 2007, in order to reduce respondent burden, new screening questions were added to the Survey of Household Spending questionnaire for some categories.

For a few categories including education, this change has resulted in a lower than expected percentage reporting and may impact average expenditures per household reporting for some items under this category.

Source: Table B.2.7.

The Survey of Household Spending (SHS) collects information about expenditures by households and families in Canada on a wide variety of goods and services, as well as their dwelling characteristics and possession of household equipment such as appliances, audio and video equipment, and vehicles.

The Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program (PCEIP) is an ongoing initiative of the Canadian Education Statistics Council, a partnership between Statistics Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to provide a set of statistical measures on education systems in Canada.

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